

Survey of Acts - 07 (Acts 15-16)

A Meeting at Jerusalem, Paul's Second Journey Begins

Student Copy

INTRODUCTION

In **Acts 15:1**, some men from Judea began to teach the Gentile Christians that they needed to be circumcised to be saved. In response, Paul, Barnabas and some others decided to visit Jerusalem and meet to resolve the issue. **Galatians 2:1** suggests that Titus, a Gentile, was one of the others who went.

Acts 15:4 tells us that the Biblical pattern for congregational leadership was in place in Jerusalem. The Apostles were still headquartered there, but the congregation in Jerusalem had appointed elders. In **Acts 15:13**, we also see that James – an elder in Jerusalem (**Acts 21:18**) – was leading the meeting. This is appropriate since the people who went to Antioch claimed to be representing the Jerusalem church (**Acts 15:24**). These people had no authority over the church in Antioch or anywhere else. It was appropriate that Antioch send people to Jerusalem to address this issue with the elders there.

No new doctrine was being developed; the doctrine of Christ was in place when the church was established in **Acts 2**. In the first century the New Testament was being written; revealing the truth was an effort of the inspired Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (elders), and teachers (**Ephesians 4:11-16**). The fact that circumcision was not required for salvation was already true. The meeting was to confirm this truth. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas all gave testimony. After this, James quoted a prophecy from **Amos 9:11-12** to confirm that Gentiles were accepted for salvation.

In **Acts 15:19**, James gives his judgment, and in **vs 20** he suggests they write, “*that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.*” The letter was proposed by James, but the four restrictions were revealed by the Holy Spirit (**Acts 15:28**). These restrictions are not the totality of God’s requirements; they seem to refer to Gentile practices that were: 1) so commonplace that they didn’t realize they were wrong; 2) things that would be abhorrent to the Jews with whom they were trying to develop social and religious unity. The letter was sent with Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas. It was received with rejoicing. Judas and Silas (being prophets) encouraged the brethren as well. After a time, Judas returned to Jerusalem, but Silas remained in Antioch.

In **Acts 15:36**, Paul and Barnabas decided to return to the places they had already visited. Barnabas wanted to take Mark, but Paul refused since Mark had left the work on their first trip. Unable to come to an agreement, they determined to go separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus. Paul took Silas and headed north through Syria to Cilicia along the southern coast of Asia Minor. In Lystra, Paul met Timothy, the son of a Jewish mother and Greek father, who would become Paul’s companion, helper, and friend. To facilitate his service, Paul had him circumcised. This might seem odd considering the events of **Acts 15**, and **Galatians 2:1-3**, but Timothy wasn’t circumcised for salvation; it was so he could work with the Jews since they knew of his Greek heritage.

In **Acts 16:6**, we are told that the Holy Spirit would not allow them to preach in Asia, and in **Acts 16:7** the Spirit of Jesus would not let them go into Bithynia (a province in northwest Asia Minor near modern day Istanbul). Eventually, Paul saw a vision of a man from Macedonia pleading for help. In **Acts 16:10-11**, the narrative changes to a first-person account. It is generally concluded that Luke met and joined Paul in Troas.

The group went to Philippi in Macedonia where Paul met and converted a woman named Lydia, the first documented convert from Europe. Paul later cast the spirit of divination out of a slave-girl, which led to charges being brought against Paul and Silas by the slave owners. Philippi was a Roman colony granted

Survey of Acts - 07 (Acts 15-16)

A Meeting at Jerusalem, Paul's Second Journey Begins

Student Copy

many freedoms and privileges including Roman citizenship. It also brought certain obligations, which is probably why Paul's accusers said, "*These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.*" (Acts 16:20-21)

Paul and Silas were beaten with rods, thrown in prison, and bound by the feet in stocks. About midnight, they were singing and praying when an earthquake shook the prison. Everyone's chains fell off, and the doors were opened. Thinking the prisoners had escaped, the terrified jailor was about to kill himself. When Paul reassured him that they were all still there he said, "*what must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30) The earthquake and miraculous events that followed must have convinced the jailor that Paul and Silas were truly from God.

In Acts 16:31-34, Paul told him to, "*believe in the Lord Jesus.*" After washing their wounds, "*immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.*" After being baptized he, "*rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*"

After being released from prison, they went to the home of Lydia, met with the brethren, and departed.

QUESTIONS

1. The meeting in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35)

- 1.1 Acts 15:1 states, "*Some men came down from Judea...*" What passage in Acts 15 confirms that these men came from Jerusalem?

- 1.2 What was the teaching that caused the problem in Antioch? What makes this issue so important (refer to Galatians 5:1-4)?
 - 1)
 - 2)

- 1.3 Who decided that Paul and Barnabas should go to Jerusalem?

- 1.4 (Thought question) Why does the meeting in Jerusalem NOT indicate that the church in Jerusalem was superior to or had authority over Antioch or any other church?

- 1.5 Who was demanding that the Gentiles be circumcised?

Survey of Acts - 07 (Acts 15-16)
A Meeting at Jerusalem, Paul's Second Journey Begins

Student Copy

- 1.6 What passage in **Acts 21** shows that James was an elder in Jerusalem?
- 1.7 Since Apostles were involved, why was James in charge of the meeting (**Acts 15:13-19**)?
- 1.8 Summarize in your own words the testimony of Peter in **Acts 15:6-11**.
- 1.9 What passage does James quote in **Acts 15:15-18**?
- 1.10 What were the four restrictions placed on the Gentiles?
- 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
- 1.11 Who determined what these restrictions would be?
- 1.12 Were any new doctrines developed at this meeting?

2. Paul's second journey (Acts 15:36-16:40)

- 2.1 What kind of disagreement did Paul and Barnabas have concerning John-Mark?
- 2.2 Where did Paul meet Timothy?
- 2.3 Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised when in **Galatians 2:1-3** he specifically refused to have Titus circumcised?
- 2.4 Who forbid Paul to speak the word in Asia? Who wouldn't let them go to Bithynia? What is the difference between these two?

Survey of Acts - 07 (Acts 15-16)
A Meeting at Jerusalem, Paul's Second Journey Begins

Student Copy

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

2.5 What changes in the narrative between **Acts 16:8** and **Acts 16:10**? Why?

- 1)
- 2)

2.6 Who was the first convert in Europe?

2.7 In **Acts 16:16-18**, what was the slave-girl saying? Why was Paul annoyed? What did Paul do?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

2.8 Why were Paul and Silas brought before the magistrates?

2.9 What does **Acts 16:22-25** tell us about Paul and Silas?

2.10 Why did the jailor want to kill himself?

2.11 (Thought question) Why did the jailor say, "*what must I do to be saved?*" in **Acts 16:30**?

2.12 What was Paul's response to the Jailor? What did the jailor do? When did he rejoice and why?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)